

Transition Bulletin - Fall Issue

To Coordinate... To Enhance... To Serve...Through Communication

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MICHIGAN TRANSITION SERVICES ASSOCIATION (MTSA) AND MICHIGAN REHABILITATION SERVICES (MRS) TO LAUNCH A COLLABORATIVE EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIP

By Jo Cherry, MTSA President

The mission of MTSA is to provide support to its membership to assist students and young adults with disabilities as they Transition through school to achieve their post-school goals. MTSA is a well-established, statewide nonprofit organization and reaches out to those individuals and community partners involved in providing Transition services for students receiving special education services and for persons sharing concerns and interests of those students and the Association. MTSA has an independent board and subcommittees that work on specific goals each year including the MTSA yearly conference in Frankenmuth, Michigan.

With MTSA's focus on Transition youth, MTSA and MRS have an overlapping mission to ensure that individuals with disabilities have a quality life after graduating/exiting the education system. Specifically, MTSA and MRS have a common interest in the area of achieving employment outcomes for young people with disabilities.

MTSA and MRS began conversations over a year ago to look creatively at the needs of both organizations and to find a way to partner to leverage resources to help students. As a result of this conversation, the relationship and partnership between MTSA and MRS was strengthened and an idea for a collaborative project emerged.

Recently at the MTSA Strategic Planning Session, the MTSA board voted to donate \$17,500 to MRS for the purpose of establishing a fund source where at the local level, schools and MRS can compete for funding to create innovative work-based learning opportunities for students.

Work-based learning has been chosen to be the focus of the funds because there is much research demonstrating that school-age youth with disabilities are much more likely to achieve an employment outcome if they participate in a paid or unpaid work experience while in high school. Therefore, the focus of the project is to create programs that accomplish this goal. Work-based learning is a broad continuum of services that may include career exploration opportunities, paid or unpaid work experience, summer employment, internships, etc.

Several innovations have been built into the project. For example, a team approach to project design and implementation is required, involv-



ing both educational and MRS partners. In addition, an independent panel will review proposals for project selection. The idea is that collaboration and transparency is incorporated throughout the project implementation. Another innovation is that each project that is funded will report out at the MSTA annual conference so that all the attendees receive the benefit of learning about the project models and outcomes.

More information will be forthcoming about the process to submit proposals and the funds will be made available October 1, 2012. Stay tuned!

MRS PROMOTES EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR TRANSITION STUDENTS: DATA, TIPS, AND TECHNIQUES FOR SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

By Carla F. Williams, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor & Member of the Design Team

The third annual MRS Summer Transition Workshop took place on August 7, 2012 and was well attended. The event was held at the Lansing Community College as in previous years, and accommodated 115 attendees from various parts of Michigan.

This year, the Design Team focused on using “Data to Drive Decisions”. The intent was to improve employment services and outcomes for MRS Transition customers, by increasing the level of understanding/awareness for Counselors and Managers.

The Team consisted of the following individuals: Cynthia Wright, Team Leader, Marcie Alling, Becky Curtis, Nickco Dixon, Kathy Flagstadt, Stacy Janusz, Andre Nevils, Melissa Spahic, Alan Todd, Rick Webster, and Carla Williams.

The keynote presentation was given by Marcie Alling, MT-21* Coordinator and Virginia Thielssen, PhD, MSU Project Excellence. They used a Star Trek Theme of “Boldly Going Where VR Data has Never Gone Before”, and provided the workshop participants with Transition statistics based on the new “Youth Definitions”. These definitions distinguish the “Transition Youth” from the “Young Adult” which was a by-product of the input given during the first Transition Training Workshop in 2010.

Marcie and Virginia explained that a “Transition Youth” (TY) is a person age 14 - 26 and enrolled in the K-12 education system at application. The “Young Adult” is a person age 14-26 not enrolled in the K-12 education system at application.

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) uses only an age range to define youth, namely age 14-25. The FY2011 data showed that when viewing RSA data using Michigan’s two new youth definitions, it significantly changes the proportion of TY and YA served by both MRS and other states. It was also noted that 71.7% of the TY customers were coded as Most Significantly Disabled and an additional 28% were coded as Significantly Disabled. Additionally, for the MRS FY2011, 46% of the TY cases were closed as “Services Initiated Not Employed”, with an Adjusted Rehabilitation Rate of 37% (i.e. customers with an IPE who had a successful employment outcome). Findings also showed that MRS had a lower Adjusted Rehab Rate for 2008-2010 Transition Youth than for the Young Adults and Adult populations.

Overall, the data presented helped to give the group a broader view of



our work as an agency and a better understanding of the need to develop practices that will increase youth employment outcomes. More specifically, focus intently on increasing the successful rehabilitation rate of Transition Youth.

During the afternoon, seven Breakout Sessions were provided and most were repeated to accommodate those interested.

Break Out Session topics included:

- The ramifications of receiving a High School Certificates of Attendance/Completion vs. a High School Diploma with regards to jobs that specifically state “High School Diploma or GED required”;
- The use of a “Personal Curriculum” as alternative education plan to help students with disabilities earn High School Diplomas;
- The basic elements of negotiations and techniques for engaging organizations in Cooperative Agreements;
- The impending move to “Order of Selection” and the challenges facing MRS;
- Future plans of MCTI East and West;
- Transition Policies Q & A;
- The effective use of Motivational Interviewing with Transition populations;
- Feedback from Transition students, and identification of critical supports;
- Assistive technology – powerful tools for facilitating success in post- secondary training programs; and
- The use of Decision Trees for effective IPE development and realistic vocational goals.

The information was well received and proved successful in meeting the needs of the workshop participants. This was surely a day of information, interaction and ideas for useful and practical application.

Impressions of Attendees...

- The data was eye opening
- Appreciated funny and engaging elements
- Best OSS explanation thus far
- A desire to see MCTI reinvent themselves to ensure survival
- Good information on ADA
- Would have liked to hear more about Personal Curriculums
- Not enough time
- Nice to be able to ask Policy questions

Overall the workshop went well thanks to a dedicated and hardworking Design Team and some very good presenters. The feedback provided could be described as both positive and constructive.

We would like everyone to remember that each year, through your input, the Design Team is given more insight into what you would like to see next.

Remember, it takes a village!

**(Michigan Transition for the 21st Century)*



SEEKING EMPLOYMENT WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

By Cynthia Wright, Acting Program Innovation Unit Manager

The implementation of the Michigan Merit Curriculum has raised academic standards, but may have also resulted in an unintended consequence of more students with disabilities exiting high school without high school diplomas. Because MRS counselors have been requesting more information about this, a breakout session titled, "Certificate of Completion, Attendance, ADA and Personal Curriculums" was offered at the 2012 MRS Summer Transition Workshop. Presenters included Stacy Hickox, Michigan State University Professor in Human Resources, Chuck Saur, Director of the Michigan Transition Outcomes Project (MI-TOP), Dave Malott, MI-TOP Liaison to MRS and Carla Williams, MRS counselor.

The session highlighted important information that MRS counselors, students with disabilities and their families need to know. Following is a summary of what was shared.

High School Diplomas vs. Local Certificates of Completion/Attendance

In Michigan there is one diploma recognized by the Department of Education which is the Michigan Merit Curriculum. Local Certificate of Completion/Attendance are not recognized by the Michigan Department of Education. Rather they are given to students by local school districts when students are not able to meet the requirements to earn a diploma. The local decision to exit students with a certificate should (must) be made on the individual student's ability to meet the requirements with supports and modifications including a personal curriculum (PC). For further information on modifications allowed under a PC go to:

http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_30334_49879---,00.html

Disparate Impact

Current data suggests that students with disabilities are more likely to leave high school with a Local Certificate of Completion/Attendance than their nondisabled peers. This creates a disparate impact for students with disabilities. Employers often require job applicants to possess a high school diploma/GED. The employer has set criteria to screen out applicants without a diploma/GED and is inadvertently also screening out many candidates with disabilities. Another example is requiring a strength test for applicants which would have a disparate impact on the majority of female job candidates.

The Burden is on the Employer

When an employer requires applicants to meet specific criteria such as a high school diploma/GED or a strength test the onus is on the employer to prove that the criteria is directly related to job ability and success. In the example of the strength test, the employer must prove that the strength requirement is necessary to perform the job that the applicant is applying for. In the diploma example, the employer must prove that a possession of a high school diploma/GED is necessary to perform the job. If the employer is unable to make the case that the diploma/GED is necessary to perform the essential functions of the job, it is discrimination, even if it is not intended.



Griggs vs. Duke Power

In the 1970's, a civil rights case, Griggs vs. Duke Power, went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Duke Power required a high school diploma which tended to screen out African-American applicants. The employer attempted to make the case that the diploma was necessary to perform the essential job duties, but the court decided that the employer did not make their case.

Firefighters Case in Connecticut

In 2009, a firefighter's case in Connecticut set the standard for test validity through job analysis. A local fire department conducted job analysis using tasks, knowledge, skills and abilities, paired with interviews and observations to determine the essential job functions. Based on the job analysis, written and oral questions were developed for job applicants. The Supreme Court ruled that this test was valid.

The Role of the MRS Counselor and Job Developers

An employer cannot use selection criteria that results in rejection of an individual with disability unless the selection criteria is shown to be "job-related for the position in question" and consistent with business necessity. When counselors and job developers meet with employers on behalf of job seekers, there is an opportunity to talk with employers about whether or not a high school diploma/GED is absolutely necessary. Through dialogue, an employer may be willing to wave the requirement. An on-the-job training arrangement may give the candidate a chance to prove their ability to perform the job regardless of whether or not they mastered the Michigan Merit Curriculum. With skilled and thoughtful engagement with employers, opportunities for obtaining quality jobs will be available to young people with disabilities regardless of whether or not they earned a high school diploma/GED.

GOALDEN – A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MRS AND A CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

By Diana Maddox, Program Manager, Capital Area Center for Independent Living

For young adults, high school is a time for sports, dances and friends. It is also the time to decide the course to follow after high school. To help facilitate this transition, the Capital Area Center for Independent Living (CACIL) developed GOALden. Originally designed for students with autism spectrum disorders, the program is designed to accommodate a range of disabilities. Experience has shown that young adults possessing the technical skills to navigate the worlds of employment and post-secondary education will be better prepared to obtain and maintain these goals.

GOALden is designed for students 16 to 22 years of age; and is provided onsite at CACIL. Based on research and experience GOALden is designed to provide the students with a time to listen, time to process and time to practice. Instructors of GOALden are seasoned employment instructors; drawing on their experience to provide real world answers. Students will have the opportunity to work in small groups and complete hands-on projects while acquiring skills necessary to succeed in employment and post-secondary education. Topics include Disability Awareness, Conversation Skills, Interviewing and Healthy Living. The program has been completed with transition youth active within the



Lansing District Office of Michigan Rehabilitation Services. Please contact Jean Harris at 517.999.7517 or email jharris@cacil.org for additional information.

Project Mentor

Through generous support from the Capital Region Community Foundation, CACIL is beginning its second year of working with youth with disabilities to enhance their ability to effectively use social media and to gain awareness of Assistive Technology. Co-led by an Independent Living Instructor and an Assistive Technology Trainer, Project Mentor is provided onsite at local high schools.

Computer literacy is considered a necessary workforce skill. Assistive Technology is continually changing and unique to the individual. Research has shown that youth are aware of electronic media, however, often they are not as "tech savvy" as they present.

Topics include Internet Safety, Social Media Applications and Assistive Technology. Students learn how to adjust computer settings to accommodate a disability and learn about software which has cross-disability purposes. School personnel are present during the class and have expressed an increase in their own knowledge of social media and assistive technology.

Please contact Kellie Blackwell at 517.999.7524 or email kblackwell@cacil.org for additional information.

SAVE THE DATES

MI TOP Workshop
Ramada Inn
7501 West Saginaw Highway
Lansing, MI 48917
Tuesday & Wednesday October 9-10, 2012

MTSA Transition Conference
Bavarian Inn
1 Covered Bridge Lane
Frankenmuth, MI 48734
Wednesday-Friday, March 20-22, 2013

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